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## Globalization and Ecclesiastical Architecture in Nigeria

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### Abstract:

*Globalization cuts across all areas of human endeavor including ecclesiastical architecture. This study examined the influence of globalization on the evolution and development of ecclesiastical architecture in Nigeria with a view to identifying the areas of impact throughout the three phases of church building development. The area of study was Lagos State because of many reasons. The data were collected through literature, interview and field case study approach. The study identified that the first phase of its development (1845-1929) was dominated by foreign input as the established Churches were by foreign Missions that had absolute financial and construction activity control. The second phase was a mixture of both indigenous and foreign inputs as construction industry in Nigeria was still undergoing a formative stage. African Independent Churches evolved and Pentecostalism emerged as collaboration between the indigenous precursors and foreign partners. The theology had an impact on the establishment of church buildings. The third phase borrowed from foreign industrial buildings to accommodate her congregation as the Church witnessed the unprecedented population explosion and economic empowerment. This paper concludes that globalization has had its own positive influence on the evolution and development of ecclesiastical architecture in Nigeria*

**Key words:** Globalization, Ecclesiastical Architecture, Nigeria

### 1. Introduction

The concept of globalization was initially perceived as an economic phenomenon but subsequent developmental trends have shown that it goes beyond economic base. Many authors have also traced its origin to different times in the past and have defined it differently. Wikipedia, for example, observes that globalization is a process that is extending social relations across world-space in terms of the movements of people, things and ideas. It is generally known that architecture, on the other hand, helps to shape our environment and it has always evolved to reflect the accomplishments of civilization in all corners of the world recording cultural, social and political expressions in three dimensions (Dietsch, 2002). Adam (2008) noted also that architecture is like a mirror of the society which links design symbolically to express a particular analysis of society and its future direction. As people move from different parts of the world to another there is tendency for inadvertent cultural, social and political exchange.

Architecture, like the artefacts, is one of the physical expressions of a particular people at a particular period. The beliefs, traditions and culture of the people are usually expressed in their architecture. Ecclesiastical architecture which has to do with Church physical expressions has evolved through centuries of activities from house church to basilicas and recently to industrial and intelligent structures that are able to respond to stimuli in its environment. Its development has also undergone a great deal of kaleidoscopic changes in response to the dynamic nature of the Church's needs and development.

Christianity emanated from the belief system and it dated back to the period of Christ. Ecclesiastical architecture which is a type of architecture that relates to Christian religion has evolved over the two thousand years of the Christian religion, partly by innovation and partly by imitating other architectural styles as well as responding to changing beliefs, practices and local traditions (Wikipedia). The evolution and development of ecclesiastical architecture were not without initial problems. At the formative stage it was illegal to have publicly identified Christian meeting places but the victory of the Roman emperor Constantine at the Battle of Milvian Bridge in 312 AD, Christianity became a lawful and privileged religion of the Roman Empire. Before then, the Church was not recognized by the state and Christianity precursors were being persecuted and church buildings could not be erected. As Christianity itself evolved in the Roman Empire, the architecture was logically and naturally influenced by the Roman art because the ruins of Roman buildings provided the quarry for materials (Fletcher, 2001). While the Church was yet to carve out architectural self identity, functionality was the primary determinant of the sacred spaces although subsequent development led to the quest for muting the idea for expression of each time with many forms of ecclesiastical architecture evolving (Fletcher, 2001).

The trends in ecclesiastical architecture in Nigeria have undergone kaleidoscopic changes in different phases of development since its emergence in 1845. Adeboye (2009) identified three (3) phases of transformational trends of the ecclesiastical buildings occasioned by the emergence of Pentecostalism in 1930. The first phase (Phase I) was identified as the period between 1845 and 1930, the second

(Phase II) was from 1931 to 1980 and the third (Phase III) was between 1981 and 2005. These periods were significant because of the transformations of ecclesiastical buildings as a result of the factors of influences derived from Pentecostal explosion in Christendom as identified by (Adeboye2005) and (Anderson 2001).

This study identified the effects of globalization on the evolution and development of ecclesiastical architecture in Nigeria in this contextual perspective of world interchange of Christian belief system and physical expression. This study particularly took a critical examination of these effects in the three phases of its trends as identified by Adeboye (2009). The data were collected through literature, internet, unstructured interview and case study of some selected church buildings in the three phases of ecclesiastical architecture development in Nigeria. As this study is qualitative research, the data were analysed by description.

## 2. Area of Study

The area of this study was Lagos State and its environ for many reasons. Lagos State is a place that can be ascribed as the cradle of Christian evolution and growth in Nigeria. The early set of Church Missionary Society recorded its first success of entry into Nigeria through the town Badagry in 1845 before proceeding to other parts of the country (Hildebrandt, 1981). It is a place that pioneered ecclesiastical architecture in Nigeria because the first church building was erected in Badagry in 1845. Lagos State is the best place to carry out such a study like this, because it is arguably one of the most Pentecostal and perhaps Christian religious city in the world having a long history of Independent African Churches that emphasize spiritual gifts, dating back to the time of the great influenza epidemic of 1918 (Anderson, 2002).

The nature of Lagos, being one of the metropolitan mega cities, gives an impetus to the flourishing of the spread of religious activities particularly as Pentecostalism, which was identified as one of Christian movements, is considered an urban phenomenon (Anderson, 2003). Lagos' cosmopolitan structure accommodates the influence of every Nigerian tribe (Census 2006). It was the first capital of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Lagos State is located in the southwestern part of Nigeria with a population of 9,019,534 (2006 census) and an area of 3,577 square kilometres including twenty two per cent (22%) of lagoons and creeks.

The research approach is case study as the systematic investigation is qualitative in nature and the analysis is by description.



Figure 1: Location of Lagos State from Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia

## 3. Literature Review

The study of ecclesiastical architecture development in Nigeria cannot be isolated from the investigation of the development of Christian faith because the former gives expression to the latter. Their history in Nigeria could be traced together.

### 3.1. Evolution and Development of Christianity in Nigeria

During the years of the anti-slave campaigns, new missionary societies began to appear and a score or more of them sprang up between 1792 and 1835 in England, Scotland and on the general continents of Europe and North America having intension to start some missionary work in Africa (Hillarbrandt, 1990). The Protestant Churches too came alive more than ever before. Many societies were then formed at different times. Their years of formation were identified as listed in the table below:

S/No.	Names of Society	Year
1	Baptist Missionary Society	1792
2	London Missionary Society	1795
3	Scottish Missionary Society	1796
4	Glasgow Missionary Society	1796
5	Church Missionary Society	1799
6	British and Foreign Bible Society	1804
7	American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission	1810
8	Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society	1813
9	American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society	1814
10	Basel Missionary Society	1815
11	Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee	1824
12	United Presbyterian Mission	1824

*Table 1: Collated From History of the Church in Africa: A Survey, African Christian Press 1981 by Hillarbrandt*

The journey of establishing Christian faith and accompanying architecture in Nigeria began also with three or four of these Protestant groups in Europe and America when the idea of missionary work in Africa was muted. Between 1700 and 1790, a great revival among the Protestants developed and different Christians began to talk about establishing a base in Africa. The new Baptist Mission Society (BMS) pioneered the first attempt of movement on October 2, 1792 but it did not succeed. Around that time, eleven other societies listed above evolved between 1795 and 1824, starting from the London Missionary Society in 1795 down to United Presbyterian Missionary in 1824. All those were small societies attempting to do something new particularly in Africa. Their plan was to route their journey through Sierra Leon, a colony of free slaves, as a base for reaching the tribes of Africa with the Gospel (Hillarbrandt, 1990).

The Anglicans were the first to successfully arrive in Nigeria in 1845 through Badagry near Lagos. One of the missionaries was a citizen of Nigeria. He was Samuel Ajayi Crowther (1809 – 31 December 1891) from Osoogun in the present Oyo State. At first, the Church Missionary Society, under which these people came to Nigeria, made attempts to work in Badagry but later moved their Headquarters to Lagos. These Pioneers went further, but inland, to Abeokuta although without initial success. About that same time, however, other mission societies like Methodist had started Christian work in Nigeria too. Many denominations began to evolve.

Gonzalez (2004) noted that Christianity, in the 20th century, was characterized by accelerating fragmentation into denominations all over the world and that created different religious traditions. It was observed that Nigeria was no exemption. The century witnessed the rise of both liberal and conservative splinter groups, as well as a general secularization of Western society. Nigeria was not spared either. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, was noted to have instituted many reforms in order to modernize too. Protestant/Orthodox development led to Christian anarchism which rejected the Church, state or any power other than God. The post-World War II prosperity, experienced in many parts of the world, also had its effects on the Church in Nigeria. Church buildings were erected in large numbers, and the activities of Evangelical Churches grew along with this expansive physical growth (Wikipedia, 2005).

Many denominations that abound in contemporary Nigeria owed their roots to many sources. Some emerged from foreign societies and many, to African Independent bases. The Catholic and the Orthodox owed their roots to foreign societies. This study grouped these Churches for simplicity, irrespective of their denominations, into four classifications based on the identified similar religious traditions they share. These groups are Catholic, Orthodox/Protestant, Pentecostals, and African Indigenous Churches. Anderson (2001) noted that Pentecostal is the fastest growing denomination among them not only among the Nigerians but in the world and Lagos is identified as the highest Pentecostal city in the world.

While the Catholic believers describe Christian worship in terms of the seven sacraments or "mysteries", others allow a free flow of expressions. All Catholic Churches owe their allegiance to the Pope in Rome and all doctrines from there are complied with. The Orthodox or Protestant Churches share similar characteristics with the Catholics perhaps because they broke away from the Catholic during the great schism, except that development has made them to depart from the usual images in their church architecture and ceremonial rituals. This class of Churches includes Baptist, Anglican, and Presbyterian. They are usually foreign established Churches with parent mission headquarters or affiliates in Europe or North America. Their branches or Parishes, have a common headquarters to where they report or from where they receive liturgical instructions. They have structured liturgy and were initially dominated by foreign Priests and Bishops before they began to indigenize. Their liturgy did not accommodate African culture of spirituality until in the recent time when Pentecostals seem to be taking over the scene. Interviews of Dr. Adeyemi (an architect of Ecumenical Centre at Abuja in Nigeria) and the Arc-Bishop of Badagry Dioceses of Anglican Communion shows that every Church is now practicing Pentecostalism because their theology and liturgy have begun to accommodate the belief of that experience of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in the Bible (Acts 2 verses 1-12)

The African Indigenous Churches which include the Celestial Churches, Christ Apostolic Churches, and Synagogues Church of All Nations (although share some characteristics with the Pentecostals) became part of Church development. They were usually founded by individuals or group of persons who are indigenes and administratively report to no foreign mission. Some spread very quickly having branches all over the African countries as the Church expands. Although the liturgy of these African Independent Churches may differ from Church to Church, it accommodates a mixture of that of Protestants and African culture, traditions and beliefs.

Although the Pentecostal Churches may differ from one another, they share some common traits such as emphasis on teaching the word of God (turning the church to a lecture theatre), praise and worship in African way (elaborate dancing), spending time in prayers and fasting and performing miracles with the acquisition of other gifts of the Holy Spirit. The development of spirituality in individual members instead of relying on the Priests, baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues (unknown tongue), and baptism in water by emersion are also part of their characteristics. The role Pentecostalism has played in the church building stock necessitated the discussion of Pentecostalism in this study.

#### **4. Ecclesiastical Architecture Development in Nigeria**

The process of ecclesiastical architecture development in Nigeria did not begin until the end of the famous transatlantic slave trade when the coming of the early missionaries from Europe to Badagry birthed the introduction of Christianity in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (Hildebrandt, 1981; Freeman, 2006).

The need for Church accommodation warranted locating a space to preach the Bible. An organic environment was created for the church building evolution under the 'Agia' tree in Badagry and the Church meetings continued there until the site was moved to another location where the first traditional church structure was erected with bamboo walls and thatched roof reflecting the African vernacular architecture. The quest for development later produced the St. Thomas Anglican Church, Badagry which was built in 1845 in Gothic style and it became the first church building in Nigeria thereby pioneering ecclesiastical architecture (Adekunle, 2007).

Much later in 1852, the Anglican Missionaries soon brought with them to Badagry a two storey prefabricated timber house from Sierra Leone though a similar house was built in Lagos and another one in Ibadan two years later. This form of construction of storey pre-fabricated building was, perhaps, dictated by the concept of creating a status for the missionaries, as the alternative was mud / thatch since the brick construction was comparatively expensive. The model became a prototype for the first set of colonial buildings described by Mary Kingsley as "abominations" because of their noisy roofs and open verandas (Godwin, 2005).

By the time the Church thought of expanding its mission work in Lagos, a stable environment where construction could flourish had begun in 1863. Afro-Brazilians became the backbone of the building industry in Nigeria and master mason and craftsmen were able to build the Lagos Catholic Cathedral in 1897 (Godwin, 2005). All these early churches that were built were non-Pentecostal as Pentecostalism was still unknown in Nigeria.

While the Catholic and Orthodox/Protestant Churches attach liturgical and theological meanings to the architecture of their church buildings, the Pentecostals focus on worship of God with their architecture as mere shelter against environmental effects with visual connection and acoustic comfort. The Catholic and Orthodox churches, for example, use the carvings around the entrance to announce the holiness of the sacred space inside. The aisle is to draw one to the altar and the pews on either side is the gangway of a ship carrying worshippers of God. The altar, the holy heart of the building, is contained in a separated and sacred space.

Pentecostals are particularly attracted to the auditorium and theatre types of plan layout because of their scientific claims to acoustical and visual correctness, as well as the belief that the form of a building should be determined by its function. The development in other Churches manifested in the modification of altar, tabernacle and sanctuary which was a commonplace, and often a pulpit or baptismal font replaced the altar as a focal point. In fact, the evolution of austere Churches often began to resemble commercial or industrial/factory buildings. Day Star and The Redeemed Evangelical Mission both in Lagos are good examples.

In contemporary church architecture, some Catholic and Orthodox/ Protestant Churches in Nigeria still believe in monumental structures that last long time while some Pentecostals prefer temporary structures with the notion that no matter how new a church building is, it will soon become orthodox (meaning usual). The Pentecostals, also, consider erecting these temporary structures with the notion that the world is a temporary abode and heaven is the permanent home. Therefore, cinema house, warehouse, disused house, uncompleted building, hotels, multi-purpose hall, open space and any possible adoptable space became common meeting places for Pentecostal churches. In fact, such meeting places outnumber the Pentecostal church buildings and some of their buildings are arguably not necessarily architecture.

However, some Pentecostals have built fantastic structures of long span arising from a motivation to drive soul-winning programs which bring in a large number of worshippers to the Church. With the widespread gospel of prosperity spreading like wild fire among the Pentecostals, there is the encouragement to erect buildings to augment the preached word. The effect on architecture is the requirement for large span buildings with a clear vision and exhibition of modern architectural taste.

#### **5. Results/ Finding**

The findings are the outcome of the case study of one church building characteristic of each of the three phases of ecclesiastical architecture development during the period under study.

##### *5.1. Phase One of Church Building Development*

Few Christian denominations existed as only Catholic, Anglican (although originated from a Catholic), and Baptist were particularly known but Anglican dominated the landscape with their architecture than any other denomination. African Independent Churches were yet to evolve because most of the church buildings during this period emerged as a registration of the presence or development of their Mission works initially controlled by foreign missionaries and priests. The Anglican churches developed a tradition of design where there was a hierarchy of sacred spaces. From the main entrance, one entered the General (Congregation) to Holy (Ministers including Choir) and then to the Holy of Holies (Altar) as it was in the Old Testament tabernacles. The congregation sitting area was the General; the Ministers with the Choir area was the Holy while the altar was the Holy of Holies. Their liturgy became a major



factor of consideration and determinant, of their church design plans and it dictated that the principal churches were called Cathedrals with circular plans while other smaller churches could adopt any shape on plan. The circular form symbolized the unending love of God towards man.

Five (5) church buildings were identified as outstanding among the early church buildings that rose to the level of architecture. These were: The First Baptist Church, No. 24 Breadfruit Street, Lagos (1883-1887); Holy Trinity Church, Ebute Ero, Lagos (1912-1929); The Cathedral Church of Christ, No. 29 Marina, Lagos (1925-1946); African Church Cathedral (Bethel), Broad Street, Lagos (1928); St Jude's Anglican Church, Ebute Meta, Lagos (1932). Architectural design styles were mainly Gothic despite the fact that it was a period that there was agitation for and practice of modern architecture in some other parts of the world. Gothic style at that time was synonymous to church buildings as it was considered a true representation of ecclesiastical architecture.

Major building materials like bricks, iron and timber were imported from Europe and America. Construction funds were mainly sourced from the parent Churches in Europe and America.

The sizes of the churches were usually small comparatively, with a maximum seating capacity of 500 worshippers. Mega churches have been yet unknown on the landscape. Vehicular parking spaces were unnoticed perhaps because only few church members could afford them at that time.

The construction of church buildings usually took a long time; say up to a minimum of ten years, perhaps due to irregular flow of fund and long time to import building materials.

The selected sample of churches studied is The Cathedral Church of Christ as shown below.



*Figure 2: External view of The Cathedral Church of Christ, No. 29 Marina, Lagos (1925-1946)  
Field study picture in March 2008 with a lot of commercial activities and traffic congestion around it*



*Figure 3: Exterior View of the Cathedral Church of Christ When It Dominated Its Environment Before 1930*

### *5.2. Phase Two of Church Building Development*

This period was a bridge between the early ecclesiastical architecture and the modern one. The sample of Churches reviewed and analysed under this period were built between 1930 and 1980 which was the formative stage of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. The characteristic that was known about Pentecostalism was the interactive nature between some African Indigenous Churches and some

foreign Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches. The leadership of Mission Churches began to gradually transform from the foreign Bishops and Priests to the indigenous ones. Other foreign Mission groups like the Presbyterian Missions began to establish centres in the country. Some African Indigenous Churches like “Aladura” began to make collaborations with other Churches and Missions outside the country. The evolution of Pentecostalism began with interaction between the indigenous associations and the foreign denominational Pentecostal Churches

Although there was still a flavour of Gothic characteristics in some of the church buildings, there was a gradual departure from this style in many other churches. Facilities of Foreign Mission and few African Indigenous Churches dominated the landscape. The Redeemed Christian Church of God (1952), Deeper Life Ministries (1971) Church of God Mission (1973) and the Living Faith World Wide (1981) were prominent Pentecostal Churches that emerged during this period. Pentecostal architecture was yet uncommon because most of them were house fellowship or rented halls and their theology and liturgy were centred on evangelism, faith, holiness and gifts of the Holy Spirit that did not encourage church buildings investment. Local input in the design and construction of church buildings began to enjoy some patronage as foreign inputs were still noticed. Some building materials were still being imported. The style of ecclesiastical architecture began to shift from the Gothic style towards the International Style that encouraged free expression of styles.



*Figure 4: External View from North East Of Methodist Church, Yaba, and Lagos (1965)  
Field Study Picture across the Dual Carriage Road in March 2008*

### 5.3. Phase Three of Church Building Development

At this period the leadership of virtually all churches had been indigenized including the Foreign Mission established Churches. The salient influence of African traditions could not be ruled out in their theology. Many African Indigenous/Independent Churches sprang up and developed in many parts of Nigeria giving rise to accommodation of some African traditions in the theology. An example was the tradition of polygamy with a resultant effect of increase in population. The message of faith in miracles and prosperity teaching flourished among the Churches because of the demand for quick fix answers required by members coupled with the low level of poverty of the people in the third world countries. The Church did not only serve as a worship place but had become a community centre where members socially interacted and make business contacts or carry out businesses.

This period witnessed the unprecedented rate of development in ecclesiastical architecture stock. Places of worship for Pentecostals sprang up virtually dominating every street of the study area by registering their presence although many of them did not rise to the realm of ecclesiastical architecture.

The theology and liturgy of the Pentecostal Churches, other churches inclusive, began to shift to prosperity message inadvertently empowering the Church economically to invest in ecclesiastical architecture stock. Local input in the design and construction of churches began to enjoy maximum patronage and independence in some cases. Only few foreign building materials were being used and local building materials were being preferred. The style of ecclesiastical architecture began to shift to International Style where there is free expression of the individual designer. Only a few of the church buildings exhibited the flavour of Gothic that had laid precedence and were prominent in the previous periods. Few like the new Anglican Cathedral at Lokoja and the Ecumenical Centre at Abuja still celebrated the Gothic style elaborately even in the twenty first century.

What could be classified as Pentecostal architecture emerged as their liturgy and theology determined an increase in required space per person because of their worship nature which involves dancing? This architecture departed from ornamentation and ancient art, preferred the use of modern industrial materials and adopted theatre form floor plan. Mega-Churches emerged as a new vocabulary in the ecclesiastical architecture dictionary. Industrial ecclesiastical buildings sprang up as large spans became basic requirement.



Figure 5: All Saint Anglican Church, Ikosi Ketu, Lagos (Commissioned In 1993)  
Exterior Rear View Field Study Picture in March 2008

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendation

As the first set of church buildings was erected in Nigeria in the nineteenth century, the Gothic style of 1100-1690AD was the most popular despite the emergence of other styles over the past two centuries of its development in the Middle-East. At the formative stage of ecclesiastical architecture in Nigeria which was the first phase, new more durable materials and advanced construction methods were introduced into the construction industry to augment the little inexperienced local input. Institutional and complex buildings multiplied on the architectural landscape as foreign Missions began to register their presence in spreading the gospel. They gave the financial backing to the construction of the buildings. Religious activities were given impetus for the evolution of ecclesiastical architecture.

The second phase witnessed the influence of collaboration of indigenous students and scholars with global Pentecostalism proponents resulting in the breeding of the new concept of Christian worship places. Evangelism was given more prominence than investment in church buildings. The leadership of the foreign built churches began to indigenize. As the fund was no longer available from foreign sources as before, any available hall space was utilized for a worship centre as word teaching was more paramount to the Church. The third phase exhibited the wealth of the Church as Faith and prosperity formed the core of Church theology. There was a great investment in industrial buildings that accommodate large congregations. Foreign input augmented by indigenous contribution combined to make a success of this period ecclesiastical architecture development.

Globalization is, therefore, identified to have positively influenced the emergence and development of ecclesiastical architecture in Nigeria with negligible negative impact as they were turned into advantages.

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